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Volume V, Number 7

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Sisters
by and for Gay Women

July, 1974

Dear Readers

We have made this issue of SISTERS a little different. It is comprised mainly of articles which originally appeared in 1971 or 1972, and which we considered outstanding enough to be reprinted.

The cover first appeared in 1973. The ads are new.

This is the way we take a vacation.

See you in August!

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♀ ♀ ♀

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Cover many thanks to DeMetrie Kabbaz

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♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀

I.

BY

O and S

(This article originally appeared in the March 1972 issue of Sisters.)

I am writing this sketch to *Sisters* because I think others might be interested in the unusual situation that I and my lover find ourselves in. To begin with, I have been married to my husband for the past eight years, and I had thought about what it would be like to have a relationship with a woman but never had any opportunity until a year ago when this interesting couple moved in next door. I took one look at her and knew that there would be something more between us than just the usual housewife chit-chat over coffee.

Since I had never been involved within a relationship of this nature, I really did not know how to get started with her. I thought about her day and night; I would watch her come and go. I was completely captivated with her. And for some unknown reason, just the way our eyes would meet and the way she would smile, I knew. So after a couple of weeks, I asked her to go for a hike in the woods, and in my way I questioned her on many subjects, especially sex. I learned so much from her in a round-about way that I was ready to make my move. I must admit that I was a little frightened because all my dreams could blow up in my face; but I took the bull by the horns and one morning after she had taken her husband to work, I had her in for coffee. My stomach was jumping, my hands were wet--I had never done anything like this before. I asked her to sit down, and while she was

sipping her coffee, I told her that I was interested in her in a way that I had never thought could be possible.

♀♀

For twelve months now the clandestine affair has been going on completely unknown to our husbands. What is so remarkable about the whole affair is that as heterosexual couples, we are the best of friends--alone we two are lovers. The heterosexual marriage is only a convenience and a cover-up. We have considered leaving our husbands and making a life of our own, but we seem trapped by the security our husbands represent, and unable to face the social and family pressures that would result from our divorces. So we have decided to remain friends and lovers and enjoy the situation as it stands now. Who knows what the future might hold!

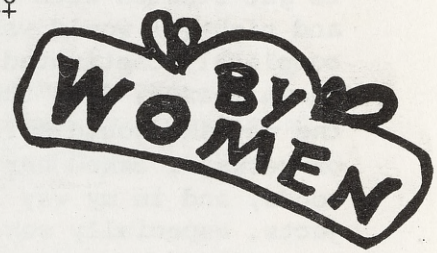
We both enjoy reading *Sisters* and we support DOB and the work they are accomplishing for the Lesbian and her role in life. We only wish we were closer so we could work with you.

♀♀ ♀♀

II.

BY

NORMA MONTGOMERY



(This article originally appeared in the July 1972 issue of Sisters.)

IT is surprisingly easy to announce to someone that you are gay. You merely open your mouth and say, "I'm gay." And watch the reaction. Which varies.

At some point in my life--about a year ago--I decided that I was tired of playing games with my friends. They were admittedly heterosexual and

were free to speak of their husbands or children or lovers in casual conversation. And they did. But I was not free to speak of my lover. I had a choice: I could change the pronoun and call her a he, which is easy enough; or I could ignore my own sexual and social existence and listen to theirs. Neither choice appealed to me.

Living in Berkeley makes everything a great deal easier. Most of my friends are to the left of the liberals and most of them do fully believe in the rights of human beings to do their own things. And, given these conditions, their responses to my announcement should have been easy to judge.

After my decision to "come out" and be open, it was not difficult to choose the time and place. I dropped the news on two of my married friends over a game of pinochle one night. We had been playing for several hours, were into our third quart of beer, had consumed several joints, and my friend Mary chanced to ask about my love life. It was a casual question, tossed onto the table with her ace of clubs. I took a deep breath and said, playing my only club, "As a matter of fact, I've been meaning to tell you. I'm gay."

I don't remember how that particular hand came out. I do know that I was blushing to my roots. Mary said, "Oh, well, that's fine," and continued to play the hand as always. I did not imagine the sort of silly little smile on her face. But it was Frank who reacted. And in no way which I had expected.

He just stared at me, a bit lopsided, with an ear-to-ear grin on his face. And *he* was blushing, too. The hand, of course, was a lost cause. I couldn't count cards, Frank wasn't even trying to, and Mary seemed--at best--remote, but still smiling.

(more —>)

It wasn't bad for a first attempt. It in no way damaged the friendships and did make them even stronger over the course of time.

♀♀♂

My second declaration came with Leslye, whom I had originally been very hung up on. Until I discovered that she was definitely heterosexual. At which point we became very good friends. I broke the news to her over a cup of coffee one afternoon when we were rapping about nothing in particular. She merely looked at me and said, "Yeah, I knew that. So what were you going to say?"

It was more difficult with Curly, who had been my closest friend for years and years. I had managed to avoid telling her because she is, without doubt, the most conservative person I know. She even lives in Los Angeles. But we did get together often, and one night when she was staying with me, I told her. She was not bothered by the news, although she at first tried to convince me that life was difficult enough without making additional problems for oneself.

I told her that I thought heterosexuality--for me at least--was an additional problem which I did not want to cope with. I would stay gay and take my chances. She has made no negative comment since then and her awareness of what it means to be a Lesbian seems to be growing with the passage of time.

♀♀ ♀♀ ♀ ??

There were a couple of friends who were a bit more tricky. Both lived back East and were friends I had met when I lived there. Both also knew the firl I had first loved, who had since gone straight and who did not want anyone to even suspect that she might have ever been anything but straight. I put off telling them for months, and our friendships suffered by the lack of honesty. I was feeling very good about myself, where I was at, and my

renewed knowledge that gay *is* good.

So, one at a time, I broke it to them. One friend wrote back, "Big deal. I don't consider sexual preference a criterion for much of anything. You have brown hair, you like women. What else is new?"

It was not all rosy, though. The other friend accepted it and said that it was fine with her. But her letters got terse. She snapped at fragments of my letters which she said were insulting to her intelligence--even though I was totally unaware that I changed anything about my correspondence to her. She certainly could not have believed that I was in any way denigrating her mind. Why? We have not yet worked it out--and I doubt that she would see her own pattern of response nor that her pickiness began with my admission of Lesbianism. She is frightened.

################

Another friend and co-worker was told the news during a long chat one day. She gradually stopped dropping into my office for coffee or conversation. I was surprised, but assume that it is her hangup and not mine that is in the way there.

Another co-worker turned the tables on me. We had had an office celebration and the two of us, half-soused on mulled wine, were left to clean up--which was fine with us since we were not really sober enough to return to the office routine.

This woman and I had never had much of a relationship at all. She was whiny and bitchy much of the time and her personality clashed most severely with mine. I knew she liked me and knew that I was not likely to respond to her overtures of friendship. But I did not dislike her and she was interesting to talk with. We were office friends: no more.

We began talking about families and what expectations they had for their children, and I rather casually admitted that my mother wanted

(*more* ⟶)

grandchildren from me but that I was not really very likely to produce them since I was gay.

She smiled broadly and said, "I thought so. As a matter of fact, I've always liked you and wondered why you didn't like me back." And from her expression I could see that she was thinking: you are gay and I like you and therefore you should like me because I am a woman. We can be lovers.

The fact that she was a woman did not remove her negative qualities, unfortunately, and I was not able to alter my lukewarm feelings about her. Which she did not understand. It was the first time another woman has ever made a pass at me. I did not like it, and she did not like being turned down.

Despite the complications, it has been a very interesting year. A good one. More than one friend whom I have told has given the whole scene considerable thought. A married friend has finally come to the realization that, even though she loves her husband, she has always been attracted to women. Two others have acknowledged having had serious involvements with other women.

♀ ?♀♀ ? ♀ ?♀ ??

The question that arises in my own mind is simple: Statistics garnered hither and yon would seem to indicate that Lesbians comprise something less than 10% of the population. My own sampling among my friends in this particular area would indicate that at least a third of them have had or would be receptive to Lesbian experience. We all know that the data accumulated on homosexuality is unprecise. Homosexuals have always lived in fear of disclosure. Worse, since many authorities and most textbooks in print consider homosexuality to be a disease of the mind, an admission of homosexuality is an admission of mental illness. Who needs that? Of course the statistics are screwed. Or perhaps the word is supposed to be skewered. Whatever....

I don't believe I am mentally ill because I prefer the gentleness, the warmth, the sincerity of women. I don't believe I am sick because I don't like my sex casually and without emotional involvement. That's a male trip, and I don't buy it.

I have discovered in the past year that a number of my supposedly heterosexual friends were/are homosexual or at least homosexually-inclined. Had I not indicated my own preferences, I would never have known. And my friends now have an instant source of information on homosexuality. Let's face the fact: homosexuality is the topic of more confusion and less fact than most human states. And it's really a pity, since homosexuals are people just like everyone else. Some of them are better and some of them are worse.

I consider myself a fairly decent human being --let it be known that I am a fairly decent Lesbian human being.

THE MATCHMAKER

by Anne Morgan

(This article originally appeared in the August, 1972 issue of Sisters.)

LESLIE was a fine person, and her concern for my singleness was sweet. The two of us were rather casual friends, but since we did work in the same office there was abundant time to chat about this and that. Her naivete was such that I was never particularly compelled to discuss my gayness with her and I listened, smiling, to her "We've just got to find some nice guy for you" sort of comment--which came regularly. Came, in fact, every time she began talking about her Ted.

I think, really, that she wanted nothing more than someone to compare boyfriends with, and until I had one I was not really doing my part. I did occasionally make references to the women I did date, sporadically, turning Jeanne into Gene and Carol into Carl to protect Leslie's tender ears from the awful truth. It was not good enough for Leslie, though, and she set out to remedy the situation by match-making.

The first attempt was really dreadful and pitted me against a first-class clod who was all for making me on the living room floor (Leslie's living room floor, at that) after an evening of dinner and conversation and too much wine. I spurned his advances and the entire scene embarrassed Leslie and made Ted uneasy. It also shattered the ego of the clod, which bothered me not at all.

Leslie does not give up, and the next weekend I was invited over for a poker game. This time she had done a better job of selecting, and Brian was my potential husband. To make for a less awkward

evening, Leslie had invited a couple of other friends of hers--Susan and Richard.

My interest in Brian, although he was a fine talker and a witty person, was fairly nil since he was of the wrong sex, and I was beginning to think I would eventually have to overcome my fear of stunning Leslie and take her aside and break to her the news of my sexual preferences to avoid further such evenings. I didn't mind that she wanted me to be happily paired off, but it seemed that she was going to a lot of trouble for nothing.

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

IT was midway through the evening when things began to happen. Susan was sitting beside me at the table, and to make her occasional comments even more pointed than she was able to do verbally, she would lay a hand on my shoulder or touch my arm. As it happened, she and I were doing all the winning, and our stacks of chips kept growing as we bluffed the other four time and again. I, of course, was delighted by the indication that the two of us could play poker better than, especially, the three men, and Susan too seemed pleased by our abilities.

Susan was about my age but looked younger (which surprised me in that I pride myself on my ability to still get carded in bars even though I've been eligible for the privilege of consuming alcoholic beverages for, lo, these many years now). And she was pleasing to my eye, although I wasn't really giving her much attention. She had, after all, arrived with Richard.

The first thing that penetrated my Missourian skull was that Susan was apparently oblivious to Richard. They had hardly exchanged two words since the evening began. They were not ignoring each other: it was merely as though they had decided to go their separate ways for the evening. And then Susan began the physical point-making and I became super-sensitive to her touches on my sweat-shirted sleeve. I liked it.

And I was confused by it. I was already about three beers gone and everything was going undigested, so to speak, through my mind. At one point I was attempting to bluff Susan with my pair of threes, and she would not be bluffed. We stared at each other without expression as she raised and I raised until everyone else had dropped out and sat watching us.

My poker face comes from having spent a lifetime pretending to not have emotions which I did have--and I wondered where she got hers. Wherever it came from, it was stronger than mine and she took the pot with what I assumed were a pair of deuces from the grin she gave me when I folded.

WHAT happened when it began to happen was that we ran out of beer. Being liberated people, it was not assumed that the men would walk the three blocks to the liquor store for more. Nobody really wanted to go, and for a few minutes we waited for someone to leap up and volunteer.

And then Susan looked at me and said, "I'll go. Want to come along and protect me?" And she smiled and I flashed that she was gay. Just like that. The flash came and went and that was all. I am notoriously poor at guessing the sexuality of other women. I know this and compensate for it by assuming that I am always wrong. I continue to make assumptions, I just also continue to assume I'm wrong.

"Sure," I said, and went for my coat.

IT was dark outside. Clouds had swept in over the Bay and obliterated the stars and what there had been of the moon. We walked out the door and through Leslie's garden, out onto the sidewalk, and down the street. Was it my imagination now or was she intentionally bumping into me every second or third step? Imagination, I thought, as she bumped against me once more. Perhaps it was merely that

she could not quite walk a straight line. Or maybe she enjoyed encountering my tender little body....

Talking about the poker game, about Leslie, about Brian (very briefly), and nothing substantial beyond that, we made our way to the liquor store, bought the essentials, and started back. She was still walking close enough to bring our bodies into collision with a nice degree of regularity, and I was still wondering to what extent I was imagining things. I had decided that it was a fine thing that she bumped me and even managed to bump her a time or two.

All the while this little scene was happening, my mind continued to race drunkenly along with the question of intent. Did she mean it? Was she gay? What was happening?

??????

WE stopped in the garden on the way back. As though we had discussed it an decided to just stop our walk there. For a few seconds neither of us spoke, and then she said, "Well?"

"Look," I said, and stopped.

In the dark I could barely see her, but her teeth showed that she was grinning broadly. Which caused me to do the same.

"Well?" she said again, and I could hear the smile in her voice.

It was, of course, impossible for me to say anything at all.

"What do you think of Brian?" she said, finally, as though changing the subject, although I couldn't really tell if that was what she was doing.

"Eh," I said and the shrug was in my voice.

"Do you know why we came tonight?" she said, and I didn't answer, not knowing.

(more ⟶)

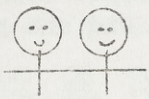
"Well," she said, "mainly because Richard has a mad crush on Brian and thinks he's gay." And she left it hanging there.

"Look," I said, but again could not quite muster words beyond that.

"Can I call you tomorrow?" she asked.

"Of course," I said. "But what will Leslie think about this all? She really is trying, you know."

"I think she's done very well," Susan said, and in the dark I felt her fingers brush against my cheek. She grinned again, and followed me into the house.



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July

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNES
	1 COUNSELING 6-8pm at DOB with Jill	SWEET CHARIOT ↗ at Scott's Bar 10 Sanchez St. 8:00pm $1.00 Donation	3 No Rap Closed eve first Wedn of the mon until furt notice.
7 LESBIAN AIR a radio show on KPFA 94.1 FM starts 8:45pm phone #981-7725	8 --DEADLINE-- 7pm Sisters Collective Meeting	9 EVERY TUESDAY Susan B. Anthony Club Meeting at 7:30pm 284 Noe Street dealing with feminist politics	10 POT L & Pan at DOB, bri a dish to s with others 7:00pm
14 EVERY SUNDAY 3:00pm at FULL MOON Women's Writers Workshop with Stephanie Mines	15 COUNSELING 6-8pm HAPPY BIRTHDAY Sue M. for the 14th	16 DOB will be open 5-10pm EVERY TUESDAY with Roberta HAPPY BIRTHDAY Sue A.	17 Laura' Rap
21 LESBIAN AIR 8:45pm Poetry & Music 8:00pm at Scott's Bar			24 Golden Chapter N.O Meeting at Church 7:30 Ellis & Taylo
28 POOL TOURNEY between Scott's Bar and Peg's 2pm Place	29 COUNSELING 6-8pm	30 OPEN MIKE NITE 9pm at Scott's Poetry/music	31 An Open on "Coming for new wom in the Lesb Community

* For S.O.L. (Slightly Older Lesbians, 30+) activities for

* L.M.U. (Lesbian Mothers Union) call 285-0392 or 431-1414

* For free Welfare Counseling & non-oppressive call Dana a

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
No Rap sed every st Wednesday the month il further ice.	4 Susie will keep DOB office open EVERY THURSDAY 1-5pm		6 DOB office will be open EVERY SAT. 6-9:30pm stop by to use the library or rap or call 861-8689
POT LUCK & Party OB, bring sh to share others 7:00pm	11 WOMEN'S ART SHOW AT Scott's Bar a mixed media exhibit 6-9pm	12 ROSALIE SORRELLS at the FULL MOON 4416 18th St. starts 8:30pm	13 WOMEN'S SEXUALITY WEEKEND starts Friday, 12th for info. call Jill at 863-7955
Laura's Rap			20 LESBIAN THEATRE at the FULL MOON 8:30pm $1.00 Door Charge
Golden Gate ter N.O.W ing at Glide ch 7:30pm lis & Taylor St.	25 HAPPY BIRTHDAY Wendy DOB open 7:30-10pm		27 POETRY READING ELSA GIDLOW 8:30pm at FULL MOON
An Open Rap Coming Out" new women he Lesbian mmunity	Maggie Rubenstein will be back at DOB in September of 1974 to do her regular raps on sex education and sex counseling. Presently, she's on vacation. WOMEN'S SWITCHBOARD NEW PHONE NO. 431-1414		

ies for this month call Berni at 483-5143

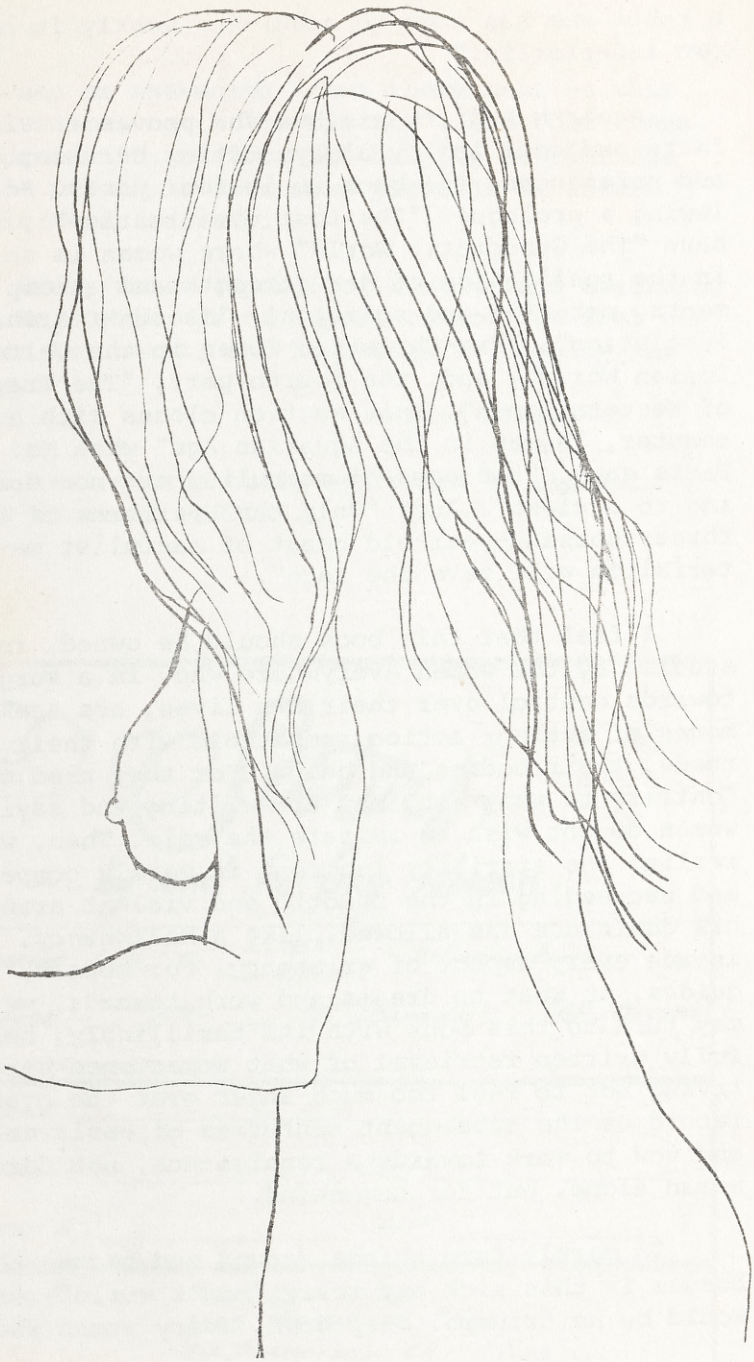
31-1414

Dana at 621-9553 (Mondays -- Fridays, after 1pm until 5pm)

THE FIRST SEX by Elizabeth Gould Davis (G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, $7.95) is a remarkable work that cannot fail to become an enduring source book for the women's liberation movement. It restores to woman her history, long suppressed, distorted, denied, even stolen, righting the wrong of what Ms. Davis calls "two thousand years of propaganda concerning the inferiority of women". To read it is to feel pride and an energy of joy in being a member of the sex that -- Ms. Davis shows with thoroughly documented fact and admirable scholarship -- actually has contributed more to civilization than man. That woman was first in the discovery of the arts and sciences. That the real "fall" of humankind had nothing to do with Eve eating an apple but resulted when patriarchy triumphed over matriarchy and throughout the ensuing centuries woman was beaten into submission and enslaved.

Ms. Davis charges that "in the frenzied insecurity of his fear of women, man has remade society after his own pattern of confusion and strife and has created a world in which woman is the outsider. He has rewritten history with the conscious purpose of ignoring, belittling and ridiculing the great women of the past, just as modern historians and journalists seek to ignore, belittle and ridicule the achievements of modern women. He has devalued woman to an object of his basest physical desires and remade God in his own image -- 'a God that does not love women'. Worst of all, he has attempted to transform woman herself into a brainless simulacrum,

--continued on page 20--



a robot who has come to acquiesce meekly in her own inferiority."

A harsh indictment; but she proves it with facts and cool logic, always citing her sources and references. The book is in four parts. Following a prologue ("The Lost Civilization"), we have "The Gynocratic World" where woman is shown in the realization of her strength and accomplishments, material and spiritual; "The Patriarchal Revolution"; "Pre-Christian Women in the Celto--Ionian World"; and, the fourth part, "The Tragedy of Western Woman". This section closes with a chapter, "Woman in the Aquarian Age" when Ms. Davis says, "the ages of masculism are now drawing to a close". And: "Only the overthrow of the three-thousand-year-old beast of masculist materialism will save the race".

I feel that this book should be owned, read, studied by the women everywhere who, in a surge towards control over their own lives, are seeking modes of action: action compatible with their needs, their bodies and being. For they need models. Contrary to what many men are writing and saying, women do not wish to imitate the male. Then, we realize the sterility inherent in merely competing and succeeding in the chaotic and violent arena his dominance has allowed, like a malignancy, to invade every aspect of existence. For models, guides, to what to dreams and work towards, we may turn to this book with its thrillingly, beautifully written retrieval of what women once were, trying not to feel too much anger over the cruel record of the subsequent centuries of enslavement; and vow to work towards a renaissance, not for woman alone, but for humankind.

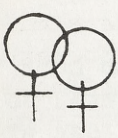
To merely turn things around and become the bosses in this sick and sorry "man's world" surely would be no triumph. Deep down, every woman who

is awake or awakening knows there must be this renaissance, not a "revolution"; and that women must guide it, restore the balance so that the female principle once more prevails in nature and in human society.

Every woman capable of reading and absorbing what Ms. Davis has to impart cannot but feel new joy in her heart, and be reborn in dignity and pride.

--Elsa Gidlow

(This review originally appeared in the July 1972 issue of SISTERS.)



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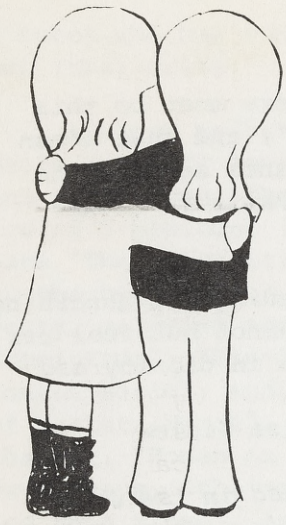

CAN YOU SPOT A LESBIAN ?

It was a typical June 15th. I was an hour late for work and two hours early for lunch, so I bought a newspaper to pass the time. I sat at my desk leafing through the typographical errors, which make me feel so superior. Gaining inner confidence with each misspelling, I turned to the "Question Man" column in the blind knowledge that it would live up to its reputation of keeping banality alive in San Francisco.

The question of the day, however, was *Can You Spot A Lesbian?* Amazed at this sudden display of controversy, I checked to make sure the paper didn't come in a plain brown wrapper to warn the children and other immature readers. It didn't.

I began to read the answers given by 'the man in the street.' The first man acknowledged

that yes indeed - he could - in fact - spot a lesbian: "It's a chick that projects masculinity. A really feminine woman can wear combat boots and a paratrooper's uniform and her femininity will still show through."

I thought to myself: so that's the trick, huh? Project masculinity! I ducked under my typewriter to feel for some sign of an impending moustache. Nothing. Hm -- project masculinity. I furrowed my brows and curled my lip in an attempt to induce masculinity. Nothing. (Gee, maybe I'm not a lesbian after all). His statement that "a really feminine woman can wear combat boots and a paratrooper's uniform and her femininity will still show through" is priceless logic. I suppose it's also relevant that a real man can project masculinity even when wearing a pinafore and a gridle.

The next man answered in the affirmative also. "I can tell very easily. It's a very cerain air about them. Strong feelings. They emit strong vibrations. It's not necessarily the way they dress. There are butches, the very masculine lesbians, and nellies, the feminine lesbians."

This guy, I thought to myself, has been to see "The Killing of Sister George" many many times; with the butches and the nellies (fems?). What really stirred me was the certain air and the 'strong feelings.' This man undoubtedly tried to assault a woman once and was kicked in the teeth by one of her 'strong vibrations.' Ever since reading this man's answer, I check my air daily to make sure it's ok.

A woman answered: "We were just talking about that. In Los Angeles, the gay girls are a lot more feminine looking. Here they're so butch. I don't think it should be that way. There's nothing wrong with it. It's just a sexual

preference, that's all."

My first thought was to ask this woman for a date. Before I do that, however, I must move to Los Angeles and become more feminine. (I hear it happens automatically when you pass Bakersfield--Poof!--and all your body hair crashes to the ground.)

Lastly, another man said: "Not always. A woman is more secluded. Quieter. A woman's whole trip is different. Males aren't as close. Girls kissing, you don't think much about it, but let two guys start kissing and they would draw a whole crowd of people."

Now, sir, let's be reasonable. I can't remember the last time I was locked in a romantic half-nelson with a woman in front of Macy's. I seem to recall the latent fear that I might be arrested. Oh, I might be tempted to try it at--say -- 3 AM on a $50.00 bet, with one foot inside the door of a very fast armored car.

I am waiting patiently not for the sequel question to "*Can You Spot A Lesbian?*" -- Perhaps something timely and thought provoking; e.g., "*Can You Spot A Straight Person?*" I will be ready with my answer: "Yes, they're the ones who think they can spot lesbians."

--Terry Rayn

(Originally appreared in the August 1972 issue of SISTERS.)

LESBIANISM AS A POLITICAL STATEMENT

by Sally Gearhart

One of the sacred things in the Women's Liberation and Gay Women's Liberation Movements (we who have desecrated so much) is the autonomy of every woman -- her individuality, her distinctiveness, her own dissent within the dissenting movement itself. It is for this reason that I can't presume to speak for Women's Liberation or for Gay Women's Liberation, but only for what these groups mean to me in my association with them. Further, since it's clear (at least to every Lesbian) that homosexual women are as different from homosexual men as either is from the heterosexual, I will be here speaking more of the woman-part of the Lesbian than of her homosexuality; it is in her identity as a woman that she finds her fundamental political identity. Finally, that word "*political*" will have to bear the additional meaning of the word "*revolutionary*."

The spectrum that is the homophile community embraces a wide range of people whose political postures vary from the militant to the silent; in it are enraged women and men preparing for an armed struggle, bisexual "hippie-type" drop outs, outspoken homosexuals maintaining a livelihood in the "establishment," "hidden" homosexuals still in the professions and the high-paying jobs, and women and men who have not done more than whisper their fear (and to them it is a fear) that they may be latent homosexuals. The majority of all gay people will admit that their oppression results from something's being horribly wrong with society; the more radical groups, such as Gay Women's Liberation, seem to have a broad concept of things specifically that are wrong and further, a broad vision of what could be -- the ways in which human beings, under different economic and social circumstances, could relate to each other. Gay Women's

Liberation, like the Women's Liberation Movement, is beginning slowly but powerfully to articulate both its discontent with the status quo and its vision of human potential.

Lesbianism is implicitly revolutionary. If I indulge in a homosexual act I am in two significant ways in revolt with my brother, the gay man: first, I rebel with him against the government because I am breaking the law; second, I rebel with him against the Church which requires that my love-making be restricted to the opposite sex (and to only one of those, at that). But at this juncture my gay brother and I part company as revolutionaries and my oppression as a Lesbian becomes distinctively and more fundamentally my oppression as a woman.

1) I am in deeper and more righteous revolt than is my homosexual brother against the exploitative capitalistic economy which looks at the home I live in, i.e., at my very body and tells me (as it does not tells a man) that that body is an object of male pleasure on which I am expected to use thirty tubes of lipstick every year and for which I am to purchase a wardrobe whose shoes will cripple my feet and whose skirt lengths will capriciously change every season at the whim of some Paris or New York designer (male).

2) From a more radical standpoint than a gay man, I am in revolt against the nuclear family structure -- home, motherhood, and even apple pie -- which tells me (as it does not tell any man) that the only choice I have is to marry and have children (as to how many I shall have, I have no say-so) and that I must grow emptier with every passing year as a thin shadow of my superior husband.

3) Unlike the gay man who is in revolt against the Church, I am in revolt against the whole rationalistic, unfeeling, bureaucratic, duty-bound, male-

instigated and male-perpetuated Protestant/Catholic/Jewish ethic which has branded me (as it has not branded any man) a "helpmate" or a "rib" rather than a person -- the same ethic which (more directly than the Church would care to admit) is responsible for the power-mad waging of war and destruction, the same mentality which with its penis-probing machines and blissful unconcern has robbed and exploited the earth and its resources just as it has robbed and exploited me, a woman.

4) I am in revolt against an educational system which has told me (as it has not told any man) that my mind is inferior and my emotions sub-human, a system of male deans and presidents, male boards of regents, male superintendents and principals, which -- because I am a passive woman -- has paid me less and worked me harder than any man.

5) I am in more angry revolt than is my gay brother at a medical profession which informs me (as it does not inform him) that it will be dammed hard for me to become a doctor, which in the name of hygiene makes a concerted effort to alienate my sisters from their children in the sterility of hospital childbirth, and which tells me as Freud has told it that my neurosis is simply my failure to accept the fact of womanhood's inferiority.

I am in revolt against a complex interwoven system whose every part conspires by both subtle and obvious means with every other part to keep me down. So name any institution or institutionalized idea and you name my oppressor, whether it is the mass media with its perpetuation of the myths about me and the automotive industry which profits from my ignorance of carburetors, or the chivalry that would so nobly put me in the lifeboat first, or the superstud who wants me in bed and in the world only in one position -- on my back where I'm helpless.

As the Women's Movement begins its political involvement (and it is only just beginning), two phenomena stand out: there is within the movement a fear of excessive structure and a desire for honest relationships.

The structure phobia rises out of the realization that an organization can become an institution (like the Church or the education system) the moment it ceases to serve the needs of its members. Thus a mass meeting of women characteristically has no officers, no chairwoman (except one chose impromptu), no agenda (except that brought by those attending), no committees (except those formed spontaneously whenever and wherever women decide to get together for some specific purpose -- and that happens often), and no vote (but rather a consensus that takes into account the diversity of psyches there assembled). However threatening such looseness may be, it finds justification in its contrast to the overly-organized, man-ordered procedures that we're accustomed to. It is cumbersome, time-consuming, rambling, frustrating, tiring, and ultimately effective.

The desire for honest relationships springs from a disenchantment with the roles that men have defined for women and from a realization that lines of communication among women have been blocked by such role-playing. The Small Group has become the indispensable vehicle of women's liberation and of women's committed solidarity. Participation leads to involvement, and participation begins best in the highly personal sharing of experiences with other women, in women learning to love other women -- and yes, that sometimes means loving physically. The Small Group develops the natural and fundamental characteristics of women as relational beings; it strengthens women in their individual battles against oppression; it assures more interest in and a deeper understanding of the political activities undertaken by women in larger groups.

Both Women's Liberation and Gay Women's Liberation are understructured, intensely relational arenas of expression for women who seek more than the status quo can offer. Coffee clatches and quilting bees may be fun and good but they are not enough; gay bars and dances may be fun and good but they are not enough. There is a deeper place we can go with women as persons; there is a wider territory we can cover with women as powerful political entities -- there is sisterhood and there is rebellion.

We are learning that (in the vernacular) the world had better get its shit together. I believe women understand this need better than men, that more women are rapidly coming and will come to understand it. When that happens, over half the population of the world just might be involved. That's considerable number of people, the proportions of a real revolution -- perhaps the first real revolution we have experienced as a human race.

I invite men, too, to examine themselves -- by themselves -- beginning with full and honest recognition of what they have done and are still doing to half the population of the globe. In discovering their oppressiveness, they may well come upon the causes of their own oppression. -*continued on the next page*-

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In the Japanese films of Hiroshima's holocaust there is a small child's message written in the atomic dust -- she's desperately searching for her family: "Sister, where are you?" She could also have witten, "Brother, where are you?" Both questions are my own. But the first has for me a clear priority. I'll find my sisters first. They will help me to my brothers -- if brothers there be.

(Ms. Gearhart wrote LESBIANISM AS A POLITICAL STATEMENT in December of 1970)

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* * *

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* * *

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